

other side of the road. They went their own way. They did nothing.

The United States cannot be silent and walk on the other side of the road while Christians worldwide are beaten, beheaded, and brutalized because they are Christians. We must be that beacon that shines in proud protection of religious freedom for all—including Christians.

And that is just the way it is.

#### HAPPY BIRTHDAY WISHES TO THE HONORABLE RON PAUL

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES. Mr. Speaker, one of my dearest friends, and a man nationally known for his knowledge and wisdom on so many subjects, recently celebrated his 80th birthday on August 20. That special friend is Ron Paul.

Those who had the pleasure to serve with Ron know how he served with unwavering principles. Whether he was fighting the Federal Reserve, speaking out against unnecessary war, or defending life, Ron Paul lived out the principles he holds dear and upheld the Constitution. That is why I supported him when he ran for the President of the United States of America.

Mr. Speaker, it was Ron Paul who started the Liberty Caucus, of which I am still a member. I will always remember very fondly when we met in his office in the Cannon Building for lunch meetings. He would invite speakers who were expert in everything from monetary policy to foreign policy. We all got so much out of those Liberty Caucus meetings.

He helped me and many of my colleagues have a better understanding of monetary policy, what are good policies and what are bad policies. Too many times our leaders don't understand the impact and complexities of monetary policy. Mr. Speaker, it is obvious, with our growing debt of \$18.3 trillion, that our leadership in both parties should call on Ron Paul and ask his advice.

In my 20 years in Congress, I have not had a better friend than Ron Paul. I have always been able to count on Ron as both a personal and professional confidant.

In his many years as a "citizen patriot," as his son United States Senator RAND PAUL calls him, the cause of liberty has never had a better friend than Ron Paul. Ron is a great fighter for the Constitution; and even though he is out of public office, his fight is just as strong today as ever.

I'm sure many of my colleagues in the House would join me in wishing a belated happy birthday to Ron Paul, my dear friend, and a friend of the Constitution.

#### U.S. FORESTRY BUDGET

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from

Pennsylvania (Mr. THOMPSON) for 5 minutes.

Mr. THOMPSON of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, this has been, once again, a really catastrophic wildfire season. In fact, we saw the loss of lives of individuals who serve our country in the United States Forest Service, and so we certainly keep them and their family members in our thoughts and prayers.

It is time that we address this issue in terms of the expansive fires that we have seen. The administration has been very vocal for the need to provide more funding to combat more wildfires and also stop more fire-borrowing from the Forest Service budget. As a matter of fact, there was a press release yesterday regarding the administration's letter to Congress addressing the budget issue.

I agree there needs to be a solution, but fixing the budget is not the final solution. However, addressing the fire-borrowing will not solve the problem alone.

Mr. Speaker, in 1995, fighting wildfires consumed one-sixth of the Forest Service budget. In 2015, this August, it is consuming one-half, 50 percent, of the Forest Service budget. We have to address, though, the root cause of this problem, which is not just warmer temperatures, but it is largely the fuel load, the fire load, from the lack of active management, insufficient active management, in our national forests.

It is also very important that the Forest Service have the ability to expediently treat national forest acres for forest health and wildfire prevention. The Agriculture Committee passed through the House H.R. 2647. I was very proud to be a cosponsor of that bill and managed that bill on the floor. It passed with bipartisan support. This bill is called the Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015. This legislation is an earnest attempt to give the Forest Service more authority and much-needed flexibility to deal with these challenges of process, funding, litigation, necessary timber harvesting, and much-needed active management in our national forests.

Now, the Obama administration strongly opposes this legislation despite, yesterday, in an Agriculture oversight hearing where we heard from the Under Secretary words like "collaborative" and the "need for expedited NEPA," which is a national environmental assessment. It doesn't mean there is no assessment; it just does it in an efficient way. It provides what is necessary, not overregulation, providing more categorical exclusions to NEPA. Those were all things the Under Secretary said that this administration is supportive of.

Well, Mr. Speaker, those are all things in this bill, and yet the administration, for whatever reason I have a hard time understanding, is opposed to this bill.

One of the solutions here, obviously, is to do good, active timbering. I want

to come back, Mr. Speaker, to those years, 1995, where one-sixth of the Forest Service budget was consumed for fighting wildfires—and that is a lot, one-sixth. That year, they generated 3.8 billion board-feet of timber. That was the harvesting that took place. Just 7 years prior to that, we were harvesting 12.7 billion board-feet. That was the high in recent decades, in 1987.

As you can imagine, when you are doing that much harvesting, you are reducing the fuel load. You are reducing the risk. Fire needs oxygen, it needs fuel, and it needs some type of energy to ignite it. If you take away the fuel, any of those three triangles, as a long-time firefighter, I can tell you that is how you prevent fires. Yet today, August 2015, where we are spending one-half of the Forest Service budget, we are taking money out of timbering programs and multiuse programs, they are only producing 2.4 billion board-feet from our forests.

Now, you look at what is the value of that? So you take the difference between where we were at a high of 12.7 billion board-feet—and that wasn't at a sustainable rate; we were growing much more timber than what we were cutting even in 1987—so that is a difference of 10.3 billion board-feet.

How do we put an economic value on that? Well, if you just look at what the most recent average is for board-foot of timber harvested in national forests, Mr. Speaker, and you calculate that difference, if we would be harvesting and active timbering, active management the way we should, just looking at that 1987 standard—which is well below what we potentially could be cutting—that is \$169 billion in revenue coming into the Treasury of the United States.

Our national forests are meant to be resources that provide for our Nation. With \$169 billion, do you know what, I think we would have the resources to fight the fires. But if we were truly timbering where we should be, we wouldn't be having those fires.

The U.S. Forest Service did recently announce that it has already surpassed its more than \$1 billion budget for fighting wildfires and that it will have to transfer an additional \$450 million from programs which benefit national forests across the Nation. This is the eighth time since 2002 that the service has had to transfer such funds because of wildfire costs. Such transfers take money directly out of timber harvesting and salvage logging, recreational activities, grants to States, and even funding for fire suppression.

There is a better way to do things. I look forward to working with our Forest Service, and I encourage the Obama administration to support that.

Mr. Speaker, I agree with many of my colleagues that these wildfires should be treated as natural disasters and the Forest Service needs budget flexibility.

This is why I strongly support H.R. 167, the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act.

Avoiding these funding transfers, keeping funding where it belongs, and increasing our